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Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

Summary record of the 311th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 2 September 2008, at 4 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Badji ..... (Senegal)

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The meeting was called to order at 4.10 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

1. *The agenda was adopted.*

Update on developments since the previous meeting of the Committee

2. **The Chairman** said that on 22 July 2008, the Security Council had met to consider the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. In his capacity as Chairman of the Committee, he had spoken about the latter's serious concern over Israel's continuing settlement activities in violation of its road map obligations. Since the Annapolis Conference, Israel had announced plans to build more than 3,000 apartments in and around East Jerusalem. The settlement blocks, together with the wall being built by Israel largely on Palestinian land, severed Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank, thus posing an enormous challenge to the permanent status negotiations.

3. On 6 August 2008, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert had met in Jerusalem, along with their negotiating teams. The two leaders had discussed concerns about the political upheaval in Israel and its impact on peace talks. A second meeting had taken place in Jerusalem on 31 August 2008.

4. Upon learning of the passing of Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish on 9 August 2008, the Chairman had sent a letter to Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas expressing the heartfelt condolences of the Committee to Mr. Darwish's family and to the Palestinian people.

5. On 25 August 2008, Israel had released 198 prisoners, who had been welcomed by Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas at the Ramallah Muqata`a. Some 11,000 Palestinians remained in Israeli prisons.

The situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem

6. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for Palestine) said that the situation on the ground had not improved visibly. According to the Peace Now movement, settlement activities had accelerated and intensified, in contravention of international law, of Security Council and other resolutions, of Israel's road map commitments and of the spirit of the Annapolis Conference. In June and July, the Group of Arab States and others had held negotiations with the Security Council in order to persuade the Council to assume its responsibilities and to adopt a simple resolution similar to the one put forward by the Quartet, calling for the cessation of settlement activities and the dismantling of outposts. A draft resolution had been submitted in due form to the Security Council, but the Council had concluded that it was not ready to adopt it. He hoped the Council would re-examine the issue and take appropriate action in the future, if it failed to do so and Israel's settlement activities continued, the entire peace process could collapse.

7. While welcoming Israel's release of 198 Palestinian prisoners, he underlined that hundreds more had been detained and that thousands remained in Israeli prisons. The recent release of certain prisoners had nonetheless been particularly significant in that Israel was relaxing its previously intransigent stance on releasing prisoners "with blood on their hands".

8. The Gaza siege continued even though the ceasefire remained in effect. In that connection, he expressed appreciation for the civil society organizations that regularly transported ailing or otherwise needy people out of Gaza. Such organizations would continue their work until the tragedy of the collective punishment of all Gaza residents was over and the borders were reopened to the flow of people and goods.

9. The imminent replacement of Prime Minister Ehud Olmert had created a tense situation; however, the Palestinian people were willing to deal with any Israeli leadership in the future as long as it observed the principles of negotiation based on the relevant point of reference and the Madrid principles, such as "land for peace", as well as relevant Security Council resolutions, the road map and the Arab Peace Initiative. The meetings held between Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and the Palestinian leadership had not been fruitful owing to Israel's unwillingness to deal with problems adequately. As had been reiterated many times, either the Palestinian people would settle all major issues with Israel or there would be no agreement.

10. Other meetings had recently taken place in Washington, D.C., and efforts were being made

through a mediation process led by United States Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to reach an agreement before the end of President Bush's term of office. The Palestinian people were negotiating in good faith but it was difficult to be optimistic given the other parties' inflexibility. Meetings had also been held in Ramallah with United States Secretary of State Rice and other leaders, but no peace treaty had been produced as envisaged under the Annapolis peace process. Palestine would continue to strive towards an agreement that would give the Palestinian people their own independent, viable and contiguous Palestinian State in the areas occupied by Israel in 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and to find a just and acceptable solution to the refugee question on the basis of General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 1948.

11. In recent months, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas had launched a reconciliation initiative in accordance with the Yemeni initiative aimed at restoring national unity and preparing the Palestinian people for difficult times ahead.

Request by Nicaragua for membership in the Committee

12. **The Chairman** informed the Committee that he had received a letter dated 7 July 2008 from the Permanent Mission of Nicaragua to the United Nations expressing the Nicaraguan Government's desire to become a full member of the Committee. He took it that the Committee wished to accede to that request.

13. *It was so decided.*

14. **Ms. Rubiales de Chamorro** (Nicaragua) said that Nicaragua wished to show its support for and solidarity with the Palestinian people with regard to their tragic situation as well as their heroic resistance to the Israeli occupation and their fight for an independent, sovereign country with its own Government and clearly defined borders. Since 1979, Nicaragua had shown full support for the Palestinian people in the various United Nations organs and in all human rights matters.

15. The current situation of the Palestinian people was intolerable; a fair, sustainable and peaceful solution must be found in order to put an end to the Israeli occupation and to enable the Palestinian people to exercise self-determination as a sovereign, independent State. Nicaragua looked forward to contributing to that process.

16. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for Palestine) thanked Nicaragua for its commitment and willingness to participate, and urged other delegations to follow Nicaragua's example.

United Nations Latin American and Caribbean Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace and United Nations Public Forum in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, Santiago, 11-13 December 2008 (Working Paper No. 4)

17. **The Chairman** drew the Committee's attention to the provisional programme for the United Nations Latin American and Caribbean Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace and United Nations Public Forum in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, to be held in Santiago from 11 to 13 December 2008 (Working Paper No. 4).

18. The objective of the Meeting was to encourage broad international involvement, including that of Latin American and Caribbean States, in support of Israeli-Palestinian peace and to find a solution to the conflict based on a shared vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. From a regional perspective, the participants would look into ways of consolidating and synergizing current international peace efforts. They would also consider how Latin American and Caribbean States could effectively contribute to such efforts through participation in national and intergovernmental mechanisms.

19. Internationally renowned experts, both Israeli and Palestinian, parliamentarians, representatives of United Nations Members, observers and organizations, intergovernmental organizations, civil society and the media would be invited to participate.

20. He took it that the Committee wished to approve the provisional programme for the United Nations Latin American and Caribbean Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace and United Nations Public Forum in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, to be held in Santiago from 11 to 13 December 2008.

21. *It was so decided.*

The meeting rose at 5 p.m.